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# The Jewish Quarterly Review.

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OCTOBER, 1894.

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JOSEPH PERLES.

1835-1894.

THE modern science of Judaism was not invented by Rabbis. Rappoport (in his creative period), Luzzato, Zunz, Krochmal, Dukes, Grätz, Munk, Derenbourg, Steinschneider, Jost, Neubauer—to mention but a few of the best names—these were no Rabbis as far as their office and dignity are concerned. It was not their outward position, but their inward mission that led these men to scientifically cultivate the field of Judaism and its literature, and to create the solid foundation of our present-day Jewish science. But partly contemporaneous with these, partly their successors, there have also been found Jewish pastors—the religious guides of large communities, those holding most important pulpits, who laboured very successfully to build up this many-sided branch of learning, and gave practical proof that the modern Rabbi is as well adapted to cultivate and develop the new science of Judaism as those Rabbis of former centuries were fitted to deal with and advance the Jewish learning of their own times. It will suffice to name but such men as Frankel, Geiger, Sachs, Jellinek, Löw and Kayserling in order to make it clear what part the Rabbis have taken in this great work of our century, viz., the founding and building up of Jewish science. The

connection between the official post of Rabbi and Jewish science (solely dependent upon the spontaneous activity of individuals), was strengthened when Rabbinical seminaries arose, the almost exclusive business of which consists in endowing their disciples with scientific qualifications, so as to fit them the better for their future office. And since, on the other hand, the number of those in other walks of life, who devoted themselves to Jewish learning and cultivated its literature, has during the last decades gradually become less, it naturally follows that a closer bond of union has arisen between Jewish learning and the Rabbinate, which has the significance of a real union, considering the nature the historical origin, and the mission of this office: with the result that the dignity of the position of Rabbi is enhanced by reason of its devotion to learning, and that literary activity is invested with a sort of halo by the very dignity of the Rabbinic position. As a matter of fact, the connotation, so to speak, of the term Rabbi implies a Jewish scholar; while it depends of course upon the gifts, the turn of mind and the career of each individual, as to whether he will take part in originating or advancing any work and in enriching the storehouse of literature. The Breslau Seminary has the merit of having impressed its disciples with this duty of the modern Rabbi, namely, that he should be actively engaged in the paths of science and literature: and to those of its disciples who were the earliest to proceed from its walls belongs the merit that they ever kept this ideal of duty before them, and knew how to combine the exercise of the laborious and many-sided office of Rabbi with a successful literary career. As the first and most important among these, it was customary to name the man who has but lately been taken from our midst at the early age of barely sixty years. And Joseph Perles will in future, too, be named as the pattern of a modern Rabbi, whose calling was Jewish learning, as the type of a modern Jewish scholar, who, with the utmost love and devotion, discharged the duties of teacher and leader of a large

congregation. But the virtues of Rabbi and scholar which Joseph Perles combined within himself reposed upon the stable foundation of the best qualities of a brave and noble heart, so that he presented the rare example of an harmonious life ever actively directed towards the highest ideals, and had a fascinating influence upon all who came in contact with him, impressing them with the example of an accomplished and sympathetic personality. But in these pages we do not intend to pourtray his personality, nor to speak of his labours as Rabbi. These pages are to be devoted to his literary activity; and within the biographical limits of this notice there shall appear the picture of his life-work, by means of which he joined the ranks of the leading workers in the field of Jewish learning, upon which he himself made a substantial advance, and by means of which he has secured for his memory a reputation far beyond the term of his earthly existence.

Joseph Perles was born at Baja, a small town in Southern Hungary, on the 25th of November,<sup>1</sup> 1835. He was the son of the Rabbinic Assessor (Dayan), Baruch Perles, who was descended from an old family of Rabbis. In a brief note on the expulsion of the Jews from Prague in 1744 (Frankel's *Monatsschrift*, 1866, p. 231), Joseph Perles mentions a work printed in 1739, the author of which was his ancestor, who was Dayan in Prague (the work is ethical, and cited in Benjacob's *Bibliographical Lexicon*, p. 379, No. 2441).

The family name Perles (or Perls) is traced back, according to an ancient tradition, to Perl, the second wife of the "hohe Rabbi Löw" — the renowned Rabbi of Prag, after whom it is said her children surnamed themselves

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<sup>1</sup> In his short *Vita*, attached to his Doctor's Dissertation, Perles gives the 26th of December as the day of his birth. But it seems that this was afterwards found to be incorrect, for the date communicated to me by letter by his youngest son, Felix Perles, and that which appeared in the obituary notice of the *Münchener neueste Nachrichten*, was the 25th of November.

(v. Kaufmann, *Monats.*, xxxvii. 384). The education which fell to the lot of young Perles was quite in consonance with so learned a descent. He was in early life introduced to a knowledge of Biblical and Rabbinic literature, and was at the same time sent to the Gymnasium in his native city, at which he received a certificate for proficiency. The Jewish community of Baja belonged to those of Hungary who were in the van of culture and the most progressive and enlightened in matters of religion. It therefore offered the most favourable spiritual atmosphere for the comprehensive cultivation of a youth aspiring to the office of Rabbi, both as regards Jewish and general knowledge. And Perles had the good and rare fortune, when his own city could offer him no more in the way of higher knowledge, that providentially the seat of learning was founded, at which he could prepare himself in so beneficial a manner for his future profession. In the same summer in which he passed the highest class of the Gymnasium, there was opened in Breslau (August 10th, 1854) the Jewish-Theological Seminary, which Perles entered in 1855, matriculating at the same time at the University. Both Seminary and University offered the richest opportunity for the acquisition of sound knowledge and for the scientific training of the mind. While at the seminary the teaching and example of men like Frankel, Grätz, Bernays, Zuckermann and Joël introduced him to the various branches of Jewish learning, he applied himself at the University during seven "semesters" to Oriental, philosophic, and historical studies. Of Oriental languages he studied with great zeal in addition to Arabic and Persian, chiefly Syriac, under the direction of Bernstein, the best Syriologist of his time. The exact knowledge of this language, and also his thorough acquaintance with Persian, were most significant for his later etymological researches. But the study of Syriac bore rich fruit even during his University career: I mean his critical researches into the Peschito, the important products of which he set down in his Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor (to

which we shall refer more fully), his renowned "*Meletemata Peschitthoniana*."<sup>1</sup>

Two years before the appearance of his Dissertation Perles had already appeared in public as a worker in literature, by means of a series of anonymous reviews signed with the Greek  $\pi$ , which appeared in the 6th, 7th and 8th Annuals (1857-1859) of the "*Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums*." It shows the remarkable esteem and confidence which he received from the editor of the *Monatsschrift*, Director Frankel, that he entrusted his youthful student with reviews of the most varied literary subjects; and we might specially dwell upon the fact as most suggestive, that the first work upon which Perles had to give his opinion was actually written by one of the teachers at the seminary. It was the monograph of Zuckermann: "Ueber Sabbath-Jahreycylus und Jubel-Periode" (6th Annual, pp. 194-198). These reviews, the first-fruits of Perles' literary work, by no means bear the impress of youthful production, and they already give evidence of the characteristics of his later efforts. Strict relevancy, a careful avoidance of all general observations not belonging to the subject, the gift of brief and clear language, simple and perspicuous statements, an almost obvious dislike of any attempt at rhetorical display—these peculiarities which differentiated Perles as a scientific and literary author, and from which ensued a certain refreshing dryness and plainness in harmony with the severity of his material—these characteristics are already apparent in those reviews by which he anonymously made his *début* in the literary world. It is true that they concern themselves chiefly with giving a thorough survey of the contents of the book under criticism; but they are not devoid of expressions of judgment in which we find resoluteness, and, where

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<sup>1</sup> *Meletemata Peschitthoniana*: Dissertatio Inauguralis. Vratislaviæ, 56 pp. Vide *Monatsschrift* (1859), pp. 223-225, and Ben Chananja, 2nd Ann., pp. 371-378.

necessary, unreserved severity combined with benevolent appreciation and grateful praise.

The works he reviewed are further a valuable testimony to the fact that Perles accustomed himself in early years to those branches of literature on which his later activity was spent: the History of Exegesis, Researches into the language of the Talmud and into Archæology, Legend and the History of Literature. He treats of Löw's "Hamaph-teach, Introduction to the Holy Scriptures and History of Exegesis" (6th Annual, pp. 433-435), Jehuda Ibn Koreisch's *Risâle*, edited by Bargés and Goldberg (ib., pp. 470-473), Beer's Life of Abraham (8th Ann., pp. 315-316), Kayserling's *Sephardim* (ib., pp. 41-44). Perles discussed at greater length, this time giving his name, and adding copious remarks and original explanations concerning words, Lewysohn's *Zoology of the Talmud* (ib., pp. 354-359, 390-396). His delight in etymology is evidenced in his review of the "*Etudes sur la formation des racines semitiques*," by Abbé Leguest (7th Ann., pp. 231-236). His knowledge of Italian, which stood him in good stead in his later works, is shown in his treatment of some speeches by Lelio della Torre (ib., pp. 315-316). We might specially refer to his review of two Hebrew works, the Hebrew translation of the Korân by Reckendorf (6th Ann., pp. 357-359), and the philosophic encyclopædic work of I. Barasch, with an introduction by Rappoport (ib., pp. 274-278). In the latter Perles expresses his disapproval of treating in the Hebrew language modern scientific themes. And as far as I am aware he never published his researches in a Hebrew garb, although the short preface attached to his edition of his father-in-law's work on the Targum clearly shows that he knew how to write Hebrew simply and well. As early results of his lexicographical studies we ought to mention his explanation of several foreign words occurring in the Halachoth Gedoloth, which Frankel attached to his own review of an article by Reifmann (8th Ann., pp. 158-160). Had this review been consulted in the preparation

of the glossary found in the new edition of the Halachoth Gedoloth (by Hildesheimer), it would have been an advantage.

In the year 1857 Perles gained out of seven candidates the prize for an essay on Moses Nachmanides' Commentary on the Pentateuch, and this work appeared in the *Monatsschrift* as the first independent product of the young scholar.<sup>1</sup> His taste for the historical treatment of literary subjects and his capacity to seize on the vital and essential parts of a scientific work were shown to be already highly developed in this essay, which included an adequate discussion of the historical environment and importance of Nachmanides. The spirit of Frankel, who set the subject of the essay and with whom Nachmanides' Commentary was a favourite, as well as the spirit of Perles himself, may be said to be well reflected in the following sentence employed by him to characterise the subject of his work:—"Thus Nachmanides proves himself to be a man of moderate progress, clinging to the old views hallowed by centuries, yet following the tide of his own age and taking account of the spirit of the time." In these words Perles, to a certain extent, expressed the nature both of his teacher Frankel and of his own views. Perles' work on Nachmanides remains a valuable and lasting contribution to the history of exegesis. The characteristics and contents of this Pentateuch Commentary are fully given, as well as the sources, and all literary and historical references. In a supplement which appeared two years later, Perles treats of Nachmanides' teachers, the chronology of his halachic works, his halachic authorities, and edits also his epistle to the French Rabbis on the subject of Maimonides' writings.<sup>2</sup> With this work Perles commenced

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<sup>1</sup> "Über den Geist des Commentars des R. Moses b. Nachman zum Pentateuch und über sein Verhältniss zum Pentateuch-Commentar Raschi's." *Monatsschrift* (1858), pp. 81-97, 113-116, 117-136, 145-159.

<sup>2</sup> "Nachträge über R. Moses b. Nachman." *Monatsschrift* (1860), pp. 15-1795.



his labours as a careful editor of the unpublished stores of literature.

On the 30th of March, 1859, Perles received the degree of Doctor from the Breslau University, having passed the Examination *summa cum laude*, a rare distinction. He dedicated his Dissertation to "his most-beloved Teachers" (*præceptoribus dilectissimis*), G. H. Bernstein and Zacharias Frankel. This Dissertation for the Doctorate was, as it seldom happens with such attempts, truly epoch-making. Within somewhat narrow limits it contained a fulness of most interesting matter and many new points of view. His subject was in the main nothing less than that the old Syriac Translation of the Bible, though it had been preserved by the Christian Church alone, was yet a product of Judaism, and, like the other ancient Jewish Translations of the Bible, reflected the Jewish exegesis of the Bible as well as Jewish traditions. This view has, it is true, been combated, and with good reason partly narrowed down; but it advanced to a considerable degree the knowledge of the Peschito, and for the first time brought to light its historical setting. I may just refer in passing to the two theses which Perles appended to his Doctor-Dissertation, in order, as was the custom at the time, to defend his views in public—subjects germane to the comparative researches of the author and which have not yet received adequate consideration:—"Traditionum quæ in re divina valent, similis apud Arabes atque apud Judæos est ratio:" and "*Cabbalistarum doctrina cum Ssufiorum arte cohæret.*"

In the summer of 1859 Perles made a stay in his native town, and he employed his run through the Hungarian capital in looking through the Hebrew and other Oriental MSS. contained in the National Museum of Hungary. A short account of the former he contributed to Löw's *Ben Chananja*,<sup>1</sup> which periodical contained other contributions

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<sup>1</sup> "Die Hebraica im ungarischen Nationalmuseums in Pest." *Ben Chananja*, 2nd Ann., p. 571. Details concerning these manuscripts are

from his pen in 1859 and 1860 :<sup>1</sup> his intention to refer to the other Oriental MSS. in the proper place was not carried out. In the course of the last two years of his studentship at Breslau, Perles published two most valuable and interesting archæological studies, having collected scraps of material with the greatest industry and care, which contributed greatly to the understanding of these subjects.<sup>2</sup> He further published some reviews and notices.<sup>3</sup> The time was approaching when he was to leave College and take up the profession for which he had been preparing himself with so much diligence and devotion. Before he had reached the end of his College term at Breslau he received a call in the autumn of 1861 as Rabbi of the *Brüdergemeinde* of Posen ; but it was not before the 30th of April, 1862, that Perles, in conjunction with his two colleagues, M. Güdemann, at present Rabbi in Vienna, and M. Rahmer, at present Rabbi in Magdeburg, was at a public celebration declared fully qualified to undertake the position of Rabbi and Preacher. It was the first celebration of its sort at the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary, and one can quite understand the following proud terms in which the Director reported upon it in the *Monatsschrift*, 12th Ann., p. 56 :—"This

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given by Sam. Kohn, *Die hebräischen Handschriften des ungarischen National-museums* : Berlin, 1877.

<sup>1</sup> "Über den Ausdruck מָחֵיָא als Bezeichnung der Auferstehung." B. Ch. II. 466. "Die Nabatäer im Thalmud und Midrasch." B. Ch. III. 81. "Chrysostomus und die Juden." *Ib.*, 569-571.

<sup>2</sup> "Die jüdische Hochzeit in nachbiblischer Zeit," *Monatsschrift* (1866), 339-360, appeared in separate form : Leipzig, 1860. "Die Leichen-Feierlichkeiten im nachbiblischen Judenthum," *ib.*, 1861, pp. 345-355, 376-394, also separately printed : Breslau, 1861. Both appeared in English in the Hebrew Characteristics of the American Jewish Publication Society: New York, 1875.

<sup>3</sup> The reviews are now signed with the initials J.P., and refer to—*Die Fabeln des Sophos*, of Landsberger (9th Ann., 71-74) ; *Don Joseph Nasi*, of M. A. Levy (*ib.*, 118, 119) ; *Die Juden-Frage*, of M. Kalisch (*ib.*, 387-391) ; *Ueber die Chronik des Sulpicius Severus*, of J. Bernays (10th Ann., 152-155). *Vide* also, in 8th Ann., pp. 319, 320, a note upon das Targumwort מְסִיחָא. *Ib.*, 435, concerning several remarkable statements made by a Persian lexicographer relating to a Jewish money-forgery.

Institution has now by means of these young men redeemed the promise which it made to the public at the time of its inception; then it could but beg for the confidence of its supporters, now it has the consciousness of not having abused that trust."

Perles worked for a whole decade in Posen. Concerning his position there we have the following statement of a trustworthy writer (in a necrologue in the *Israelitische Wochenschrift*, March 30th, 1894): "Perles was a very young man when he came to Posen; but even then he was invested with a certain dignity and loftiness of mind which made him respected by the entire large congregation. Not that he had the talent or the desire to cast a halo about his own person; there was, in fact, no one simpler and plainer than he was. That sanctimoniousness of the pastor, which, however much it may impress the ignorant, is repugnant to and repels the enlightened, was foreign to Perles' nature; it was, in truth, abhorrent to him. But, nevertheless, there was a charm about his personality which captivated those who were admitted into his family circle. For fortune had favoured him with a helpmate who had the most exalted notions concerning the dignity of the office of preacher, and who cherished the thought that it was within the power of a preacher's wife—aye, that it was incumbent on her—to help and even sustain her husband."

It was on June 2nd, 1863, that Perles contracted the matrimonial alliance, which proved a truly happy one, with the partner of his life, as she is described in the words I have just quoted. Now she and her two exemplary sons mourn the loss of husband and father, so early taken from their midst; but what a source of comfort must the widow find in the recollection of three decades passed together with her husband in a work so heartily taken up and jointly carried out to the blessing of both! The father-in-law of Perles, who died in 1885, was a learned merchant, who made the *Targumim* his favourite study, and whose *Hebrew*

*Commentary on Targum Onkelos* may be described as the best and most thoroughly scientific manual, free from dilettantic speculation, which exists for the study of the *Targum*. It was edited by Perles in 1888.<sup>1</sup>

Almost simultaneously with his marriage Perles was able to publish the first-fruits of his studies in Posen—the monograph concerning R. Salomon b. Abraham b. Adereth (Adret), which, in consequence of its subject-matter, stands in close relation to his prize essay on *Nachmanides*.<sup>2</sup> Conspicuous in it appears the controversy regarding the Philosophy and Freedom of the Study of Science, in which Salomon b. Adereth took a leading part, and which is presented to the reader by Perles by means of a careful analysis of the most important collection of statements upon the subject contained in the book *Minchath Kena'oth*. In the Appendix Perles publishes two hitherto unknown writings of S. b. Adereth,<sup>3</sup> and the preface to Jacob b. Anatoli's homiletic-philosophical work, which subsequently appeared in a complete form.

The archives of the congregation at Posen gave Perles an opportunity of turning his attention to another phase of Jewish history. He wrote the *History of the Jews* in Posen,<sup>4</sup> according to Professor Kaufmann's opinion (Sup-

<sup>1</sup> *Biure Onkelos*, Scholia zum Targum Onkelos von Simon Baruch Schefftel. Edited after the death of the author by Dr. J. Perles: Munich, 1888. 288 pp.

<sup>2</sup> *R. Salomo b. Abraham b. Adereth. Sein Leben und seine Schriften*, nebst handschriftlichen Beilagen zum ersten Male herausgegeben: Breslau, 1863. 83 and 61 pp. See *Reviews* by Frankel (*Monatsschrift*, 12th Ann., pp. 183 and 188) and Geiger (*Jüdische Zeitschrift*, 2nd Ann., pp. 59 and 63). The work is dedicated "in loving devotion" to Dr. H. Graetz, "the valued teacher and friend."

<sup>3</sup> They are: The beginning of a commentary upon the Agada of the Babylonian Talmud (24-56); A polemical treatise defending the Jewish religion against the attacks of a Mohammedan. In the latest volume of the *Z. d. M. G.* (vol. 48, pp. 39-42), Schreiner shows that these attacks on the part of an unknown Mohammedan are identical with those of the Mohammedan polemical writer, Abû Mohammed Ibn 'Hazm.

<sup>4</sup> *Monatsschrift*, 13th Ann. (1864), 281-295, 321-334, 361-373, 409-420,

plement to the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, of Munich, March 17th, 1894) "the most important monograph in German which has appeared to this day on the subject, distinguished alike by the evidence it affords of researches into archives, and of deep acquaintance with what has been written on the topic by Rabbis of the Middle Ages and modern times." To the same class of writings belongs the work which was published two years later, *Records Concerning the History of the Jewish Provincial Synods in Poland*.<sup>1</sup>

Such historical studies in nowise drew Perles away from his never-ending task of investigating and explaining the language of the Talmudic and Midrashic literature.

When I. Levy's *Chaldee Lexicon of the Targumim*, etc., appeared, Perles contributed to the first six parts most valuable appendices, chiefly concerned with Persian.<sup>2</sup> In an interesting article he points to an older worker in the field of Rabbinic vocabulary, and shows that many of the explanations of foreign words given by M. Sachs are already to be found in De Lara's work,<sup>3</sup> and that his etymologies are often to be preferred to those of later scholars. He soon showed in how masterly a manner he had conquered the subject of Talmudic etymology by the appearance of a very important work, the last that he finished in Posen. Few books present, within such narrow limits, such a richness of material combined with a host of fresh views and observations as his *Etymological Studies*,<sup>4</sup>

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449-461; 14th Ann. (1865), 81-93, 121-136, 165-178, 205-216, 256-263. In separate form: Breslau, 1865.

<sup>1</sup> *Monatsschrift*, 16th Ann. (1867), 108-111, 152-154, 222-226, 304-308 343-348.

<sup>2</sup> *Zu dem Chaldäischen Wörterbuch von Rabbiner Dr. J. Levy. Monatsschrift*, 15th Ann., 148-153; 16th Ann., 297-303.

<sup>3</sup> David Cohen de Lara's *Rabbinisches Lexicon Kheter Khehunnah*. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der rabbinischen Lexicographie. *Monatsschrift*, 17th Ann. (1868), pp. 224-232, 255-264, separately: Breslau, 1868.

<sup>4</sup> "Etymologische Studien zur Kunde der rabbinischen Sprache und Alterthümer. *Monatsschrift*, 19th Ann. (1870), 210-227, 253-267, 310-326, 375-384, 415-431, 457-478, 493-524, 558-567. Also printed in separate form (with a short preface and four registers): Breslau, 1871.

which deserve to rank with such works as Michael Sachs' *Contributions to the Science of Language and Archæology*. Both Perles and Sachs, had a two-fold object, namely, by means of proper etymologies, to advance the knowledge of the Rabbinic texts, and to deepen the historical knowledge of Rabbinic antiquities.

It is difficult, considering the nature of the subject, to give in a few sentences an idea of this work. Perles, as was his custom, did not furnish it with any general introduction, but plunges his readers at once *medias in res*, inasmuch as he uses a string of examples to show how a right etymology is conditional upon a previous correction of the text. He makes ample use of this need for copious textual emendation, but never in a capricious and unscientific manner. The etymological studies of Perles may be regarded as a rare and rich fund for the explanation of foreign words, Greek as well as Persian, occurring in Rabbinic literature, and they carry out the author's wish as expressed in the preface to the special edition, that "they might advance the scientific enquiry into the yet much-confused language of Rabbinic literature."<sup>1</sup>

The decisive period of the Franco-German war was an important turning-point in the life of Perles. The Jewish congregation of Munich elected him their Rabbi, and he was thus transferred from the provincial city of Posen to the capital of Bavaria, in which it was his lot to labour incessantly until the very end of his life. On the first day of Shevuoth, May 26th, 1871, he delivered his Installation Sermon, from which we would extract a few sentences and give them as a sample of the sense in which Perles re-

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<sup>1</sup> A few of the writings of Perles during his labours in Posen have yet to be noted here:—"A Review of S. Kohn De Pentateucho Samaritano." *Monatsschrift*, 14th Ann. (1866), pp. 356-359. "Die Leichenverbrennung in den alten Bibelversionen," *ib.*, 18th Ann., pp. 76-81. A Review of Stein, *Talmudische Terminologie*," *ib.*, 473-477. In 1864 there appeared "Gottesdienstliche Vorträge," held in the Synagogue of the Jewish Community of Posen, in aid of the Riesser-Stiftung: Posen, 1864.

garded his vocation and the manner in which he discharged its duties:—"I regard it as the first and indispensable demand made upon the conscientious guide of a congregation, that he be impressed with the exalted and important character of his office, which is, that he is the bearer and proclaimer of pure and unadulterated doctrine, and that he shall ever have present before his mind the weighty responsibility which rests upon his shoulders. . . . . I regard it as the second demand made upon the conscientious guide of a congregation, that he shall never tire in the task of proclaiming those truths of which he has become convinced by reason of his uninterrupted investigation of the Word of God, such truths, the acquisition of which have only become possible for him by reason of his contact with noble spirits and earnest thinkers. . . . . I regard it as the third and highest demand made upon the conscientious guide of a congregation that, by means of the example of his own life, he should point the way to his congregation in morality and uprightness of character. . . . . I shall conscientiously make enquiry into the present conditions of the congregation and see what is necessary for the development of its religious life. I shall oppose that want of moderation which flies to extremes, the unconditional reverence of all that is ancient, simply because it is ancient, and the unconditional apotheosis of all that is new, simply because it is new. . . . . It shall be my earnest endeavour to bring about, in conjunction with my congregation, an adequate and proper form of divine service in harmony with the times, one that shall satisfy both the mind and the heart, one that while it will draw to the House of God the cultured members, the younger generation, our wives and daughters, shall not repel from its midst that faithful band of fellow-worshippers who belong to the old school."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Antrittspredigt gehalten bei der Übernahme seines Amtes als Rabbiner der israelitischen Cultusgemeinde München. Proceeds to be devoted to the sick and wounded in the German army": Munich, 1871. 15 pp.

Perles was, in fact, the conscientious guide of his congregation, to the members of which, in the sixth year of his ministration among them, on the occasion of the fiftieth (jubilee) celebration of the Synagogue, he addressed the following words:<sup>1</sup> "As in the past half-century, so shall there be proclaimed during the coming time in this Synagogue the principles of truth, the fear of God, and the love of one's fellow-man; there shall be reared and educated in this place a generation of peace—peace with God, with the State, with the community, and with society at large." And God's blessing rested upon the efforts of Perles. Just as he offered his congregation the best at his disposal as regards the treasures of mind and heart and the power of the will, in the same manner did his congregation give him the best that a congregation is able to offer its pastor—unlimited confidence, an affection begotten of unbounded respect, full appreciation of his instruction, and reverence for his personality. Under his lead the Munich community, the largest in Southern Germany, grew in outward dignity and internal possessions; and coming generations will find an evidence of his activity as Rabbi in the new Synagogue, which was founded mainly by his efforts, and consecrated on the 16th September, 1887, and which stands as "a monumental work of architecture, much admired," and which, in a city abounding in works of art, "ranks among the numerous large and beautiful houses of prayer, or at least takes a modest place in their midst." In the Dedication Sermon,<sup>2</sup> from which these words are taken, Perles, while apostrophising the pulpit, the seat of his own eloquence, makes the following remarks: "O place whence words of instruction flow, be thou and remain for all times a seat of

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<sup>1</sup> Predigt zur fünfzigjährigen Jubelfeier der Synagoge zu München, am 1. Pesach-Tage, 5636 (April 9th, 1876): Munich, 1876. 20 pp.

<sup>2</sup> Reden zum Abschiede von der alten und zur Einweihung der neuen Synagoge in München, am 10. und 16. September, 1887: München, 1887. 18 pp.



fruitful impulse and religious teaching. Let all impatient expressions, all words of hatred and enmity, be ever banished from thy midst! May vanity and arrogance be foreign to those who preach from thee! From this spot may the inexhaustible treasure-stores of God's word be unlocked for the thorough instruction of the congregation assembled, so as to arouse a clear understanding of life's duties, a right and proper conception of the higher truth, a strengthening of the conscience and of the heart, a cheerful disposition in the fulfilment of those duties which devolve upon us as Germans and as Israelites, as citizens of the narrower and of the wider Fatherland! O that this might be brought about in the spirit of truth, of love, and of peace!" We would utter the wish that all succeeding occupants of this pulpit, once and for ever hallowed by Perles himself, will work in the midst of the congregation in this self-same spirit.

Munich, with its rare collection of printed and manuscript works, supplied the zeal of Perles, untiring in investigation, with never-ending means and subjects for fresh activity. Just as he once jocularly said, in reviewing the Jewish-German *Chrestomathy*<sup>1</sup> of his learned friend, Max Grünbaum, the well-known investigator of the legendary literature, that he "lived in Munich, I would fain say, in the Royal and National Library of Munich," so was also henceforth the life of Perles, as a scholar and learned author, indissolubly bound up with this famous Library. Munich, moreover, possessed in Abraham Merzbacher one of the most high-minded lovers of Jewish literature, who had formed a large and valuable collection of printed books and manuscripts, and with whom Perles associated himself in true friendship. One of the few addresses of Perles<sup>2</sup> which have appeared in print is a funeral oration on the occasion of the death of his

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<sup>1</sup> *Monatsschrift*, 31st Ann. (1882) pp. 128-138.

<sup>2</sup> "Trauerrede an der Bahre des am 21. Sivan (4. Juni 1885) verewigten Herrn Abraham Merzbacher": München, 1885. 12 pp.

friend. Perles pays a warm tribute of eulogy<sup>1</sup> also to the learned and indefatigable R. N. Rabinowicz, who was enabled by the help of Merzbacher to collect and publish his *Variae Lectiones* to the Babylonian Talmud. As for Perles himself, he too possessed a tolerably important and ever-growing private library, which contained many valuable and rare works, and which, as I am informed by his son Felix, numbers over three thousand volumes. As an instance of his personal relations, I would cull the following words from the obituary notice of a Munich newspaper:<sup>2</sup> "The respect in which the deceased was held was deeply rooted, not alone in the Jewish circles of Munich, Bavaria, and Germany, but also in the circles of Christian theology of both denominations. As scholar Dr. Perles was greatly honoured by the late Bishop Haneberg, formerly Abbot of the Benedictine Order here, and by Dr. Dollinger. The Rabbi of this city stood in constant communication on matters of learning with a number of eminent Catholic theologians."

The first important work which Perles published while in Munich follows, as far as concerns its contents, close upon his etymological studies. It consists of fifteen larger and smaller studies upon philological and archæological subjects growing out of Rabbinic literature.<sup>3</sup> There is evidence here of the abundant use made of the Midrash MSS. contained in the Munich Library. Soon followed a contribution to comparative folklore, a subject to which Perles had always paid great attention; he pointed out with much learning and in a convincing manner the Jewish sources of the *Thousand and one Nights*.<sup>4</sup> He published both works in separate form, dedicating them to "Herr Abraham Merzbacher, the

<sup>1</sup> "Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung," vom 4. December 1888.

<sup>2</sup> "Münchener Neueste Nachrichten," vom 6. März 1894.

<sup>3</sup> "Miscellen zur rabbinischen Sprach- und Alterthumskunde." *Monatsschrift*, 21st Ann. (1872), pp. 251-273, 358-375.

<sup>4</sup> "Rabbinische Agada's in 1001 Nacht. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Wanderung orientalischer Märchen." *Monatsschrift*, 22nd Ann. (1873), pp. 14-34, 61-85, 116-125.

friend and patron of Rabbinic studies.”<sup>1</sup> He edited simultaneously a highly interesting Midrash, which in his thorough and masterly manner he showed to be a monument of the Byzantine influence upon Judaism,<sup>2</sup> and described the “Memorialbook of the Pfersee Community,” which, like other memorial books of this sort that have been brought to light in modern times, contained several accounts of persons and events of former times.<sup>3</sup> A discovery in the Munich Library soon led him into quite another field. He found in a well-preserved codex the oldest Latin translation of the *Môre* of Maimonides, with the result that the Latin rendering of the *Môre* by Giustiniani (Justinianus), which appeared in Paris in 1520, was proved to be none other than a faulty copy of this very translation. He published these and other important results of his investigations of MSS., together with specimens from them in another and larger treatise.<sup>4</sup> Rare Hebrew printed books, chiefly belonging to mediæval popular literature, and manuscripts chiefly bearing on the Liturgy, form the subject-matter of the article published in 1876, entitled: “Bibliographische Mittheilungen aus München.”<sup>5</sup> In the next year he gave an account of the contents of a work in the Merzbach collection of MSS., important in many directions, viz., the commentary upon the Piyutim by Abraham b. Asriel of Bohemia, and he published out of it several explanations of the Text given by the great Exegete, R. Samuel b. Meir.<sup>6</sup> In a

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<sup>1</sup> “Zur rabbinischen Sprach- und Sagenkunde”: Breslau, 1873. x. and 99 pp.

<sup>2</sup> “Thron und Cirkus des Königs Salomo.” *Monatsschrift*, 21st Ann., pp. 122-139. Also in separate form. Breslau, 1873.

<sup>3</sup> *Monatsschrift*, 22nd Ann., pp. 503-515, 572.

<sup>4</sup> “Die in einer Münchener Handschrift aufgefundenene erste lateinische Übersetzung des Maimonidischen Führers.” *Monatsschrift*, 24th Ann. (1875), pp. 9-24, 67-86, 99-110, 149-159, 209-218, 261-265. Also in separate form: Breslau, 1875.

<sup>5</sup> *Monatsschrift*, 25th Ann., pp. 350-375.

<sup>6</sup> “Das Buch ‘Arûgath Habbossem des Abraham b. Asriel.’” *Monatsschrift*, 26th Ann. (1877), pp. 360-373. Also in separate form: Krotoschin, 1877.

collection of Responsa of the 17th century, he thought he had found some mention of the unfortunate Uriel Acosta ; but his surprising discovery met with serious doubt.<sup>1</sup>

The Breslau Seminary, to the memory of whose first director, Zacharias Frankel, Perles in 1875, also devoted a faithful and mournful tribute,<sup>2</sup> celebrated on August 10th, 1879, the twenty-fifth anniversary of its establishment. At the request of the former students of the institution, Perles issued in celebration of the event a remarkable monument of mediæval literature, which led him back once again to that period of ferment and strife with which, on the occasion of his monograph on Solomon b. Adereth, he had identified himself. His edition is based upon the only extant MS. which happened to be contained in the Munich Library.<sup>3</sup>

When the *Revue des Etudes Juives* was established, Perles became one of the contributors, and wrote in the third volume two articles concerning some disputed Talmudic expressions, offering divers bold hypotheses in relation to them.<sup>4</sup> The same year there appeared in the *Z.d.D.M.G.* a splendid review of a Syriac work, use being made of some newly expounded Talmudic expressions and phrases.<sup>5</sup> And now a long pause ensued in his publications, only broken by the appearance (1882) of the review already referred to, of Grünebaum's Jewish-German *Chrestomathy*, but which was

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<sup>1</sup> "Eine neuerschlossene Quelle über Uriel Acosta." *Monatsschrift*, 26th Ann. (1877), pp. 193-213. In separate form: Krotoschin, 1877. *Vide* Güdemann and Graetz on the same (*Monats.*, *ib.*, pp. 327-330). In the 27th Ann. of the *Monatsschrift*, pp. 317-324, Perles described "Eine hebräische Handschrift der Fürstlich Oettingen-Wallersteinischen Bibliothek."

<sup>2</sup> "Worte der Erinnerung.....": München, 1875. 12 pp.

<sup>3</sup> "Kalonymus ben Kalonymus. Sendschreiben an Joseph Kaspi": München, 1879. *Vide* Steinschneider, *Hebr. Bibliographie*, vol. XXI., pp. 115-118; Neubauer-Renan, *Les écrivains Juives de XVI. siècle*, pp. 95-99.

<sup>4</sup> "Revue des Études Juives," III., 1881, pp. 109-120: "Études Talmudiques."

<sup>5</sup> "Bemerkungen zu Bruns-Sachau." Syrisch-Römisches Rechtsbuch aus dem fünften Jahrhundert. *Z.d.D.M.G.*, XXXV., pp. 139-141, 725-727.

ultimately ended by the work which came as a joyful surprise to all friends of Jewish learning, in which Perles united the rich fruits of long years of study and the results of a diligent and thoroughgoing course of literary enquiry.<sup>1</sup> This book, which is dedicated to Leopold Zunz on his ninetieth birthday, consists in a series of studies reproducing newly-discovered or newly-adduced materials with a copiousness and variety rarely met with, the titles of which can give but a very inadequate idea of the richness of its contents. Its headings may nevertheless be repeated here: (i.) The small Aruch; (ii.) The Makre Dardeke and the Munich MS. of the same; (iii.) Elia Levita's Nomenclature; (iv.) Jewish-German Glosses by a disciple of R. Moses Hadarshan of the 13th century; (v.) Unpublished letters of the years 1517—1555. As was Perles' manner, there was not even the shortest introduction attached to this collection of studies, bristling as it did with new data and explanations. The history of Hebrew and Rabbinic Lexicography, the history of the Humanist literature, the history of the beginnings of Jewish learning among Christians, the history of manners and customs, and middle High German philology (as well as French and German), receive a rich addition from the important, ample and trustworthy materials presented in this volume. To the same class of literature as the "Contributions" belongs an article which appeared two years later in the *Revue des Etudes Juives* on the Jewish Scholars of Florence.<sup>2</sup> Perles continued his investigations concerning the small Aruch in a neat article forming the beginning of the German portion of the Grätz-Jubelschrift, the appendix to which contains

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<sup>1</sup> "Beiträge zur Geschichte der hebräischen und aramäischen Studien": München, 1884. 247 pp.

<sup>2</sup> "Les savants juifs à Florence à l'époque de Laurent de Médicis." *Revue des Etudes Juives*, XII. (1886), pp. 244-257. Separately: Paris, 1887.

some highly learned contributions to the History of Literature, specially to that of the habits and customs of the Jewish people.<sup>1</sup>

In 1888 Perles edited the work on the Targum, written by his father-in-law, to which reference has already been made, and allowed, apparently through continued ill-health, a somewhat long pause to ensue before he again rejoiced the hearts of friends and adorers with the fruits of his uninterrupted labours. Then in a tolerably lengthy publication he wrote of the Sicilian Bible Exegete Aboulrabi,<sup>2</sup> who had become famous by reason of his free and original views, and dealt more briefly with the Legend of Asenath.<sup>3</sup> The reappearance in the autumn of 1892, after a long interval, of the *Monatsschrift*, for many years the home of his literary activity, afforded Perles a welcome opportunity to publish what he had been collecting for some time, new *Contributions to Rabbinic Philology and Archæology*.<sup>4</sup> Here again, after a lapse of twenty years, he proved himself to be still the tried master of etymological studies. It seemed as if he returned with renewed pleasure and undiminished vigour to his favourite investigations. Partially collating the results of former inquiries, partially widening their range and presenting new matter, he wrote a most fascinating article upon "Jewish Byzantine Relations."<sup>5</sup> Everything tended to show that a new period of active originality and fruitful research had begun in his life. Even his health had

<sup>1</sup> "Die Berner Handschrift des kleinen Aruch." Jubelschrift zum siebenzigsten Geburtstage des Prof. Dr. H. Graetz: Breslau, 1887, pp. 1-38.

<sup>2</sup> "Ahron b. Gerson Aboulrabi." *Revue des Etudes Juives*, XXI. (1890), pp. 246-269.

<sup>3</sup> "La légende d'Asenath, fille de Dina et femme de Joseph." *Revue des Etudes Juives*, XXII. (1819), pp. 87-92. Perles let this article appear in Hungarian in the 8th Ann. of the *Magyar Zsidó Szemle*, pp. 249-252.

<sup>4</sup> *Monatsschrift*, 37th Ann. (new series, 1st Ann.), 1892-1893, pp. 6-14, 64-68, 111-116, 174-179, 356-378.

<sup>5</sup> "Byzantinische Zeitschrift," herausgegeben von Karl Krumbacher. Vol. II., pp. 569-584.

become better. In the summer of 1892 he visited, after a long absence, his native place in Hungary, to which, in spite of his having become a thorough German, he was deeply attached, watching with sustained interest the social and literary movements of the Jewry in Hungary.

In the spring of 1893, on my return from a mournful journey to Paris (whither I had gone to pay my last respects to a dear brother of mine), I spent almost an entire day in the family circle of Perles, and realised the picture of the noblest form of domestic life of a man who found in his vocation, his learning, and his near and dear ones, the concentration of all fortune and felicity, the picture of a man who looked into the future with the fullest confidence and security. There was no trace then of a shattered constitution; he showed me some new and valuable acquisitions to his library, and spoke of continuing his contributions to Rabbinic philology, and of other work that he had in view. Full of pride, justified in a father, he spoke of the progress made by the younger of his two sons (the elder had already earned for himself distinction as an ophthalmologist), who seems to have inherited the talent for languages and the spirit for research, as well as the philological turn of mind, which characterised his father, and whom he trained to continue his vocation and his scientific labours. When I bade him "Auf Wiedersehen," I little dreamt that my words would never be realised. In the beginning of the following year the news spread of his serious illness, though the hope of his recovery was not abandoned. When I forwarded to him, in the middle of February, the Hebrew poems of my late father, which had just appeared, he thanked me through his son, at the same time informing me that he was progressing slowly. But the hope was vain. On Sunday, March 4th last, Joseph Perles breathed out his noble soul, and on the 6th his mortal remains were laid to their eternal rest, amid the deepest manifestations of wide-felt

mourning, in the cemetery belonging to the Israelitish community of Munich. His name and memory are honoured and blessed among the Jews of Hungary, whence he sprang, as they are honoured and blessed in the Jewry of Germany, in whose midst and for whose welfare he laboured. But he will be ever mentioned in the annals of Jewish learning among the best spirits, among those whose life was one uninterrupted work in spreading this learning and advancing the knowledge of this science. Blessed be his memory !

W. BACHER.

Budapest, May, 1894.

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